

Quick Wins Newsletter

Vol. 5

Oct. 27th, 2016



Turn your entire organization into a Customer Suggestion Inbox – Customer input comes at your organization all the time. It varies in form, content, and direction. Every employee in the business can potentially receive customer input. It may mask itself in product returns, emails, phone calls, sales calls, the list is endless. But the burning question is; are you currently capturing and evaluating every one of these inputs or suggestions? In most businesses, a great deal of customer input or feedback never gets beyond the individual receiving it.

If you are like most organizations and you know your business is failing to capture a significant portion of customer input, this could be a great opportunity to start creating a customer facing culture for your business. As the discipline of capturing and evaluating all customer input improves, every employee begins to see how they play a role in the overall health and success of the company. It is important to point out that both positive and negative feedback should be captured and evaluated. Both create opportunities to focus the business and its actions on customer value.

Here are a few “Quick Wins” involving the discipline of capturing and evaluating customer feedback:

Create and document your process to capture and elevate customer feedback. As a starting point, you might be able to use a process you already have on the shop floor. It could be very similar to how your deal with scrap and rework in manufacturing, just directed at customer input. Basically, identify the input, react to it if able to resolve, record it, escalate it if necessary, apply root cause corrective action if necessary, update standard work if necessary, etc.

The process can be automated, online, or as simple as a standardized slip of paper that every employee uses to capture customer input. Encourage and reward every employee who participates in this process. To guaranty each input receives the appropriate level of review, include in your process a cadence for conducting the review of all customer input. Pick an appropriate review cycle for your business. One possibility to guarantee leadership involvement, include reviewing customer input during a scheduled Gemba walk. If you have a small number of inputs, discuss each one briefly. If you have a significant number, Pareto the data so you can prioritize by the number of occurrences, and then take actions as required in response to the input.

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The Quick-Wins Newsletter will provide brief Quick-Win project ideas to kick-start, progress, or rejuvenate your Continuous Improvement journey to World-Class. In support of the Quick-Wins Newsletter, download and take my Leadership Self-Assessment survey.

My Leadership Self-Assessment can be downloaded at:
www.tangibleimprovement.com/quick-wins/

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Tangible Improvement offers Executive Interim Management solutions, helping you execute your business strategies without delay. We are available to fill an opening, at the highest level of management, in several key functional roles. *“Never delay promoting a good employee due to lack of bench strength to backfill a position. Fill the role with an interim solution while you recruit the long-term replacement.” –Dean Cantrill*

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Ensure that all inputs are visible to all employees, as well as, any root cause corrective actions taken to resolve customer issues. This sounds simple, but you will quickly find that many employees need constant encouragement to comply with this process. It is common for employees to act quickly to resolve customer issues but fail to document the problem. The employee may assume they have resolved a one-off issue unique to a customer and it probably will not happen again.

Do not be concerned that this process will interfere with creating an autonomous workforce. It actually supports the goal of having an autonomous workforce by showing the employee that not only finding a quick solution to one customer is important, but also driving to root cause to prevent this problem from ever happening again can be a much greater benefit to the company in the long run.

“Here are some examples based on my past experiences that might convince you that your organization is not be capturing and reacting to every customer input and what value could be missed as a result.”

Your General Manager receives a call from a key customer with a complaint regarding your company’s response time to resolving a particular issue. The GM immediately calls the functional lead responsible for this support, gives direction, and assumes it will be taken care of immediately due to chain-of-command. A follow-up discussion takes place at a future staff meeting to make sure the problem is resolved. Since it was done person to person, verbally, no corrective action is put in place to prevent this from happening again. This can be a huge problem because some customers may simply change suppliers in the future rather than pick up the phone and call the General Manager to complain, emphasizing the value in capturing the input the first time.

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A field sales or marketing representative receives input from a customer that normal use of your product wears off the labeling. The labeling may have many benefits to your company such as branding, serialization, date sensitive information, etc. and all will be lost due to field usage. If this feedback does not get escalated to the manufacturing site, and a successful root cause corrective action (RCCA) does not take place, more products will be produced and placed in the field with the same issue. The product may work perfectly, but the value of the labeling will be lost.

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Your shipping department receives a call requesting a Return Merchandise Authorization Number so the customer can return a damaged shipment. This happens occasionally and it is assumed the trucking company is at fault. If the shipping damage is not recorded and a RCCA performed, the opportunity to prevent this from happening in the future is lost. Regardless of how your product is handled, shipping damage and the time and cost to resolve this issues can significantly impact your customer who may be operating their business in Just In Time methodology, creating line stoppages. So regardless of fault, the value to the customer is destroyed.

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An inside sales representative receives a call for a repeat order from a very happy customer. The reason for the reorder given on the phone by the happy customer is they have found a new application for your product and they need to increase their order quantity. If this customer feedback does not make it back to the marketing and sales teams, the ability to pursue similar applications with different customers will be lost.

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There are hundreds of examples, but I think you get the point. Try not to make “customer satisfaction” a particular function or department’s job. A benefit of creating a customer facing culture is the realization that every employee plays a critical role in customer satisfaction, which translates to business health and job security. So turn your entire organization into a Customer Feedback Suggestions Box. It sounds simple but requires discipline and potentially a change to your organization’s continuous improvement culture.